

PLATE VI.—THE SILVER FIR AT ROSENEAR

THE Silver or Female Fir is the most beauteous and graceful of all its numerous tribe in the mountainous parts of Scotland, where, as Evelyn justly observes, "are trees of wonder upon places so inaccessible and far from the sea, that, as one says, they seem to be planted for nurseries of seed, and monitors to our industry; reserved, with other blessings, to be amongst the new-invented improvements of husbandry, not known to our southern people; we consider the pains they take to bring them out of the Alps, we should less stick at bringing them from the utmost parts of Scotland."

The Silver Fir represented in the plate is the property of his Grace the Duke of Argyll, and is now in height. In girth it is twenty-two feet four inches at one foot from the ground, and at five feet from the ground. Its solid contents are estimated at six hundred and thirty cubic inches; but this calculation is probably only an approximation to the truth. The age of the tree is the introduction of the Silver Fir into Scotland is however commonly understood to have been about twenty years since, which period corresponds very well with the size of this tree. Others of the same species, the ages of which are known. Evelyn mentions two Silver Firs in Middlesex, "that being planted there anno 1603, at two years' growth from the seed, and now goodly masts. The biggest of them from the ground to the upper bough is eighty-one feet high, the top, which has not a little impeded its growth. The girth or circumference below is thirty-six inches length, so far as is timber, that is, to six inches square, seventy-three feet. In the square, amounting by calculation to one hundred and forty-six feet of good timber."—*Silver Fir*.

This quickness of growth is only one of many recommendations in this beautiful species of great importance in regard to planting it in avenues, and near houses; for which it is the graceful stateliness of its form, and the beauty of its foliage, presenting on one side a deep emerald, and on the other a delicate relief of silvery stripes, which, when agitated by the wind, presents a noble variety of appearance.

PLATE VII.—THE SCOTCH FIR AT DUNMURRAY

THOUGH the Fir will grow in all parts of the kingdom, and is as useful in clothing the hills of Yorkshire as the rugged mountains of Scotland, it perhaps nowhere attains such perfection as in this country; particularly in those situations in the Highlands where it is most exposed to a proportion to the tardiness of its vegetation, in consequence of the little influence of the sun, together, it completes by slow and sure degrees the health and strength of its timber, and is nurtured to prematurity of stature in richer soils and warmer situations.

This remark may be applied to all other timber trees as well as to the Fir. Pliny says that Fir grows in moist and sheltered places are not so close, compact, and durable, as those which grow in open and exposed places. And Homer, who like Shakespeare had read the book of nature as well as that of human history, compares to Agamemnon a spear formed of a tree which had braved the fury of the tempest: he alludes to Didymus the express reason for this choice; "because," says he, "it becomes hard and strong as it is weather-beaten." The wise Chiron shows the same prudence in choosing a mountain tree:

"Alone, untouch'd, Pelides' jav'lin stands,
Not to be poised but by Pelides' hands:
From Pelion's shady brow the plant entire
Old Chiron rent, and shaped it for his sire;

Whose son's great arm alone
The death of heroes, and the

Nevertheless that the Fir can so readily be forced to speedy growth is an advantage in which it is mentioned one which "did shoot up less than sixty feet in height, in little more than twenty years; who may be waiting impatiently to see his newly-erected mansion enveloped in the graceful shelter which only stately trees can give, will do well to cultivate

"Cedar, and Pine, and Fir, and branching Palm;"